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ABSTRACT

This paper begins by reviewing current research on the merits and failings of various forms of inservice teacher education. Much of the research quoted stresses the need to consult teachers on their opinions of their educational needs. A study is described that assessed the current status and future directions for inservice activities as expressed by Massachusetts home economic teachers. The instrument used in the study was a questionnaire. Results and findings of the study are listed. It is concluded that: (a) much is to be gained by "asking the teacher" concerning the future of inservice activities and (b) the results of the Massachusetts study indicate the need for a greater variety of types and lengths of activities, for measures to increase teacher motivation for continuous professional growth, and for more inservice programs offered for graduate credits. (JA)

## INSERVICE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF TEACHERS

by  
Marian L. Wilson

1 In a changing society the role as well as the competencies demanded of  
2 teachers are constantly changing. This is an indication that four years of  
3 college will not prepare a teacher for a life-time career and relevant, in-  
4 service activities must be available to all teachers. These activities will  
5 become a more vital influence on professional growth if the planners are aware  
6 of where the participants are and take them from there in the direction they  
7 want to go.

8 Rakes (5) is very critical of the millions of dollars that are spent on  
9 national, state, and local workshops, in-service meetings, courses and other  
10 activities, with limited success of these efforts. He recommends a diagnos-  
11 tic program in which the participants determine to some extent what is  
12 included.

13 Many school systems require teachers to obtain additional credits for  
14 salary increment. Graduate level courses should be available to meet the  
15 constantly changing needs of teachers. This added responsibility may tax the  
16 already limited resources of the colleges and universities. Crabtree (2) ad-  
17 vocates that in-service education must be an important constituent of  
18 university teacher education programs; but, before the program can be estab-  
19 lished the expressed needs of teachers must be considered.

20 Lano (4) states that "no one asks a teacher much about anything - and  
21 about professional development, even less." Surveys of needs expressed by  
22 teachers are few and infrequent, and there is danger that teacher education  
23 programs may become insensitive to actual teacher needs.

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24 Finding out what teachers need and want was the first challenge of  
25 NEA's Division of Instruction and Professional Development. An in-depth  
26 study was conducted to identify teacher problems and the type of assistance  
27 that would reduce the problem. (3)

28 Bohn (1) believes that the current teachers must be the ones to intro-  
29 duce the new concepts and ideas into the schools. These ideas can be  
30 introduced to the teachers through in-service education, but first the  
31 teacher must be convinced that the change is desirable and will improve his  
32 instructional program.

33 Motivation for participation is a current concern in that teachers who  
34 need updating are the most likely to remain complacent. Interest in contin-  
35 uous professional growth would be heightened if state departments of  
36 education had periodic assessment of certification with renewals dependent  
37 upon effective preparation and performance. (7) Periodic certification  
38 evaluations could serve as an incentive for those teachers retiring tempo-  
39 rarily from the field to raise a family, to continue to remain professionally  
40 active. (6)

41 These concerns for effective in-service programs to meet expressed needs  
42 of teachers prompted a study sponsored by The Home Economics Resource Center  
43 at the Framingham State College. This study assessed the current status  
44 and future directions for in-service activities as expressed by the  
45 Massachusetts home economics teachers.

46 The objectives of the study were (1) To determine the expressed needs  
47 of home economics teachers in relation to in-service education. (2) To  
48 determine the most desirable types of in-service activities. (3) To deter-

mine the most desirable subject matter areas to be included in such programs. (4) To gather educational preparation data, teaching experience, and other relevant information from the teachers. (5) To make these findings available to the institutions of higher education and other groups responsible for in-service programs.

A questionnaire was designed to collect the desired information. It was pre-tested and the final form was sent to all 1403 home economics teachers in Massachusetts. A total of 956 (68 percent) returned the questionnaire. Data were collected on their teaching experience, educational background, marital status, professional affiliation, subject area taught, future study plans, topic of interest in in-service programs, most desirable types of in-service activities, and principle influences on course content.

#### Results and Findings

Both personal and professional information was collected and analyzed from the 956 respondents, with the major focus on in-service educational needs. A summary of the major findings of the study is as follows:

1. Forty-five percent of the teachers had taught five years or less, while 15 percent taught 20 years or over.
2. Fifty percent were either single or married with no children, with the balance either married, widowed or divorced with children.
3. The educational attainment of 23 percent of the respondents was a Master's Degree or over.

- 72 4. Over half (56 percent) had received educational preparation  
73 in home economics education, with the balance majoring in a  
74 home economics subject area except 7% who received their  
75 Bachelor's Degree in a non-home economics area.
- 76 5. Thirty-five percent were members of the state and national  
77 home economics professional association, while 70 percent  
78 had joined the teachers association.
- 79 6. Less than four percent were involved in an occupational  
80 home economics program.
- 81 7. Twenty percent of those not having a Master's Degree are  
82 currently working toward it, while thirty percent intend to  
83 study for this degree within the next five years.
- 84 8. Forty percent of the total respondents were not interested  
85 in graduate study with family responsibility, lack of time,  
86 and nearing retirement given as the most common reasons for  
87 not pursuing further study.
- 88 9. Course work was required for salary increment by sixty-five  
89 percent of the teachers, and 87 percent had taken some  
90 college-level courses within the last five years.
- 91 10. Subject areas of nutrition, consumer education and family  
92 relations, along with new methods, techniques, instructional  
93 media, and dealing with the low ability student were rated as  
94 most desirable in-service topics by two-thirds of the respondents.
- 95 11. Short summer seminars of one or two weeks or weekday workshops  
96 during the school year were the most favored types of in-  
97 service activities.

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## Conclusions

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Considerable input influencing the direction of in-service activities can be gained by "asking the teachers". Teachers responded to a list of 36 possible topics according to their need for information and interest. Those topics of greatest interest could be incorporated into courses offered by the colleges or universities, serve as a focus by the professional association in their meetings and journals, and be used by the state departments of education as workshop topics. The pre-service teacher education program could use these concerns to insure more relevant teacher preparation.

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More in-service programs should be offered for graduate credit to meet the needs of those studying or planning to study for a Master's Degree or to meet salary increment requirements. These programs should be conducted off-campus as well as on-campus to provide more accessibility to the teachers.

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A greater variety of types and lengths of activities are indicated. Both summer and school year programs are of interest to the teachers. These programs should be planned to meet a wide variation in education levels, undergraduate training, teaching experience and interests.

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More motivation is needed to encourage participation and continuous professional growth. Increasing efforts by the state home economics supervisors, the institutions of higher education, and the professional associations could be made to motivate teachers to continue professional improvement through graduate study and by participation in other in-service activities.

123       The need for state-wide coordination of in-service education pro-  
124       grams is of increasing importance and could serve to make the best  
125       possible use of limited resources. Follow-up studies and trend analysis  
126       should be a continuous part of in-service planning activities and would  
127       serve to make these programs relevant to the times and needs of the  
128       participants. Responsibility for this rests equally on the colleges and  
129       universities, the state departments of education, and the professional  
130       associations.

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